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ABSTRACT

The social problems associated with aging are viewed as derived from a series of socially defined meanings in the areas of: (1) power/authority,(2) responsibility, (3) productivity/work, (4) dependence/ independence,and (5) knowledge/rationality. A parallel series of alternative meanings is proposed which make possible the creation of alternative institutional forms which hold promise for making contemporary problems substantially obsolete. An era of post-professinalism is envisioned in which helping agents become political activists committed to social change on the cognitive, as well as the material level.

Introduction

We view social problems as the product of collective, socially and historically based human imagination. Similarly, institutional responses to these social constructs are the product of their time

and their place in history. The identification and the specification of a social problem largely determines the nature of its solution. (1)

It is our purpose to apply these propositions to the problems and issues associated with aging and old age in our society. We begin by suggesting that, for the aged, the main problem may well be that aging itself is viewed as a problem.

Our approach is importantly influenced by both the sociology of knowledge and by modern critical theory. (2) We proceed form the assumption that, what in any society is defined as knowledge and as real, is an essential determinant of, and in turn determined by the social institutions that characterize that society. Thus, to change reality involves, among other things, the reconstruction of social meanings.

This paper will examine elements of the existing institutionalized thought structure (ITS) which have a specific affect upon aging. (3) Thereafter, it will suggest a series of alternative conceptualizations which, to our mind, hold the promise of changing the meaning of growing older in a way that will importantly reduce the oppressions that are increasingly experienced by all of us as we advance through the life course. It will conclude with some ideas on how social workers might have an impact upon changing societal perceptions of aging and upon the social services which have been established to respond to the perceived problems of older people.

A Conceptual Overview

Every society, as much as every

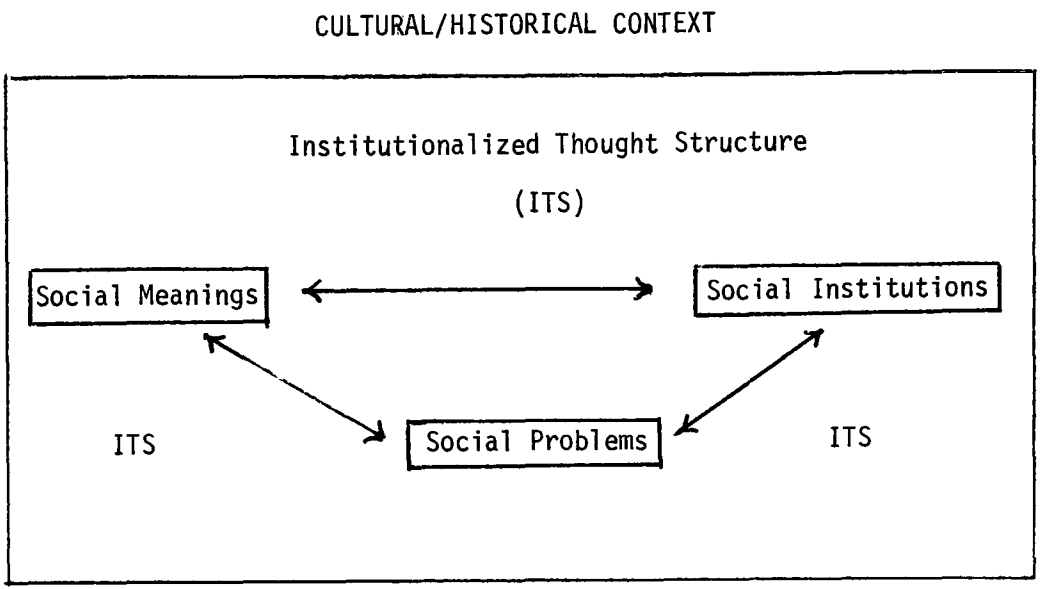
individual, strives to achieve and maintain conceptual coherence, i.e. a means of organizing and giving meaningful relevance to the complexity of human experience. (4) The very possibility of meaningful communication among humans and the existence of society as such hinges upon this phenomenon, which leads to what Roland Warren called, The Institutionalized Thought Structure.

Institutionalized thought structures are composed of loosely related, though not necessarily logically consistent, value-laden cognitive elements which dominate, explain, and give shape and legitimacy to the social order. (5) Though the institutionalized thought structure is a human product, it is commonly experienced as objective reality, as if it were eternal truth and logic. The ITS will vary from epoch to epoch and from society to society. It is never static, rather it constantly changes. The major ideas, institutions, and problems of any society may be viewed as an expression of a unique ITS emerging within a particular cultural/historical context. (See Figure I). These three elements, i.e. meanings, institutions, and problems, act upon each other in a mutually casual manner. It is not that one is regularly antecedent to the other, but they must somehow "make sense" within the context of the ITS.

As we have suggested, the ITS serves as a conservative force within any given society in the best sense of the word, providing for continuity and therefore for a desired and necessary element of predictability in human affairs. But how might change, especially planned change, in the ITS occur?

The change we are discussing is not

FIGURE I


CULTURAL/HISTORICAL CONTEXT
Institutionalized Thought Structure
(ITS)
Social Meanings
Social Institutions
ITS
Social Problems
ITS

limited to changes in a particular institution, e.g. a specific policy or program, or in a particular idea or item of knowledge, but rather to changes in the fundamental thought structure of the society, e.g. the meaning of success, the concept of self, or the essential relationship of human beings to nature. We postulate that significant changes in social institutions will take place only when there are fundamental changes in the ITS.

Within relatively stable historical contexts, as for example in isolated peasant societies, the institutionalized thought structure is unlikely to be questioned or challenged. Under circumstances of modest instability what Radcliffe-Brown calls "readjustment changes" may take place. Examples of this kind of change are discussed by Piven and Cloware, and by Warren, Rose, and Bergunder. (6) But in an increasingly turbulent society, with the emergent awareness of severe contradictions, and as the consequence of the application of individual and collective genius, major challenges to the ITS may result. (7) An example of one of the most dramatic of such thought revolutions in the Western world occurred during the first and second century CE, sparked by the genius of Paul of Tarsus. Fifteen centuries later, Gallileo played a different, but similar role. (8)

One way to think about changes in the ITS is to appropriate the scheme of Thomas S. Kuhn, who, in his analysis of the history of science, distinguishes between normal science and extraordinary science. (9) Normal science produces incremental changes within the context of the existing thought structure. It is largely concerned

with verification, replication, and expanded application of received knowledge within the sciences. By contrast, extraordinary science permits new paradigms to emerge. Kuhn views the development of scientific knowledge not as a continuous process of growth but as an uneven process punctuated by extraordinary events. These extraordinary and fundamental reconceptualizations are brought into the forefront as a consequence of the accretion of anomalies which cannot be resolved within the context of normal science. One of the best known examples of such an occurence is the Copernican "revolution" which undermined the "normal" concept, that the earth is the center of the universe.

Kuhn's concept of paradigms has been criticized for meaning nearly all things to all people. (10) It will not satisfy those who require all scientific truth and knowledge to be measureable and quantifiable. (But this, too, is a paradigmatic constellation.) For our purposes the term is useful in that we can compare it to the idea of ITS. In applying it to the meanings, institutions, and problems which impinge upon the field of aging we seek to identify those areas in which the established paradigm (i.e. the relevant elements of the ITS) produce anomalies which negatively affect not only those who are aged, but the coherence of the society as a whole. The highlighting of these anomalies and the development of experimental alternative conceptualizations may lead to the reconstruction of the ITS in a way that it will make it more genuinely possible to meet the needs of people.

Elements of the American Thought Structure

It is not our purpose to suggest a set

of systematically interrelated elements which constitute the ITS of modern American society. Others, notably Peter Berger, in The Homeless Mind, Milton Rokeach, and on a more popular level, Alvin Toffler and Christopher Lasch have made attempts to bring a synthesis to the consciousness of modernity. (11) Our ambitions are more modest in the sense that we seek to identify simply an array of values and associated cognitive structures, elements of the its which appear to impinge negatively upon the process of growing old, and which perpetuate the oppression of the aged.

We suggest that these elements of meaning which originate in the culture and history of the West, have evolved to a point where the institutional forms which emerged from them have become detrimental to the well being of all persons in our society since we all age and eventually we all grow old. They lead to anomalies which diminish human potentiality. In short they produce problems for which we must identify other than incremental, culture-bound, "normal" solutions.

It is largely accepted without question that:

1. The existing arrangements and distribution of power and political authority in America are good and desirable.

2. Social problems stem primarily from individual, rather than social structural deficiencies.

3. Human beings have differential worth, related to their productivity, which legitimizes the unequal distribution of rights.

4. Each person is ultimately responsible for her/him self; The social provision for meeting human needs is viewed residually.

5. Instrumental reason, which informs scientific and technological progress, will ultimately resolve all problems of society.

We will discuss each of these five societal assumptions separately.

The Social Construction of Old Age -- A Critical Appraisal

1. The legitimacy of the Political Status Quo

The political system of the United States is commonly understood to resemble a giant market. Separately and together, the variety of actors function so as to maximize their individual good, which in turn is thought to produce the best of all possible societies. (12) The status quo is legitimate (i.e. labeled just), and normatively dignified because it exists, and is the product of a just process. (13) It permits and encourages conflict among individuals and groups, but only within legitimate constraints, such as those of the market. Only those actions which are pursued in conformity with its rules are "realistic", i.e. realism becomes synonymous with system maintenance.

The aged population has in recent years been viewed increasingly as an interest group which competes within this postulated market for resources and power. Thus it is assumed that:

1. The major concerns of the aged will constitute a portion of the

political agenda.

2. Appropriate policies and programs will emerge to meet the interest and needs of the aged.

3. The aged are receiving their fair share within the system of partisan mutual adjustment.

In order to enhance this capacity to influence the political process, the aged are advised to organize, to form coalitions, and to lobby the centers of decision-making power. (14) Their failure to achieve their ends is to be accounted for by their lack of effective organization, their political apathy, their minority status, or their lack of effective (popular or professional) leadership. But, on the whole it is assumed that since the political system produces and defines justice, the welfare of the aged population is assured, to the extent that they can reasonably be considered entitled. In sum, politically there is not much more that can be done.

2. Individual Deficiencies

The emphasis on individual deficiencies as contrasted with social-structural problems has been dramatically labeled, "blaming the victim." It assumes that, if a condition is problematic, then the (deviant) individual is guilty and must change. This assumption is directly linked to the claim that this is the best of all possible societies.

Deviant behavior is thought to fall into two broad categories -- that for which the individual is at fault and that for which the individual is blameless. Fortunately for the aged, they are

generally held blameless for the deficiencies associated with their advanced years. This can be explained, in large part, by the fact that aging is popularly construed not only as being associated with illness, but also as being illness. Illnesses are considered, in this society, to be beyond the fault of the victim.

Aging, viewed as a process of physical and mental deterioration, serves as the dominant explanation for the "problem" of old age. It is assumed that this process is inevitable, chronic, and natural. In essence it is viewed as an entropic process, culminating in death, whose effects might be retarded or mitigated primarily by the provision of medical services, but never reversed. Death is an important medical event; it is the ultimate illness.

All individuals of a given age are normatively expected to behave in certain ways and to exhibit particular problematic symptoms. Specific social institutions are structured so as to respond to these expected behaviors and deficiencies. The circle is completed when individuals learn to live up to the expectations which are imposed upon them. "Don't listen to me, I'm just a crazy old codger," they disarmingly have been taught to say, and to half believe. Thus we trace the "moral career" of the stigmatized elderly. (15) This is the most pernicious consequence of agism: the victims begin to believe the doctrine in the name of which they are oppressed. (16).

The political consequence of blaming the victim in the field of aging is to make it possible for society to avoid confronting the most universal social structural problem faced by millions of

elderly, economic deprivation.

3. Inequality

In Western society high social status is correlated with what is socially evaluated as economic productivity. Productivity is thought to derive from the investment of wealth and/or from what is defined as work. Those who are younger, vigorous, daring, white, male, and in possession of utilitarian skills are most likely to be working. Thus the aged, except for those few who are wealthy, are viewed as being nonproductive and of low social status. They are "surplus people." (17)

Inequality in the distribution of rights, in the sense that David Gil uses the word, is normatively justified as a stimulus to productivity. (18) Whereas equality is popularly promoted as an ideal in Western society, it is applied primarily to the "spiritual," less to the political, and not as all to the economic sphere. Poverty among the aged in America is entirely consistent with the powerful Puritan motto ascribed to Captain Myles Standish that, he who does not work should not eat. Wisdom, honor, life experience, long suffering, etc. simply will not serve as values worthy of economic reward.

There are multiple additional consequences of the low social status of the aged related to, but not systematically determined by their poverty. Their civil rights are easily violated, as in the imposition of involuntary institutionalization. It is popularly acceptable to think and speak of older people as if they were children whose lives have to be managed, and who have little capacity to make sensible decisions for themselves.

They are expected to enjoy playing games, modeling with clay, and taking afternoon naps, much like children. When they are forced out of the labor force because they are assumed to be incompetent, inefficient, and unreliable, the elderly are subtly taught to accept these allegedly inevitable consequences of biological aging. Old age is believed to be neither functional nor very profitable. Thus it is thought to be purposeless.

4. Individual Responsibility - Societal Neglect

One of the most salient myths of American society is that of the "self-made man". Aside from its obvious sexist implications (can there be a self-made woman?), this myth gives expression to the social ideal of the autonomous and ambitious individualist who, by means of sheer determination and hard work, achieves success. Ideally, government minimally regulates individual ambition. Wilensky and Lebeaux' familiar distinction between residual and institutional social services is misleading. (19) It obscures the fact that all social welfare services in America are fundamentally residual, in the sense that they provide help and regulate the behavior of citizens who, ideally, should be independent and helping themselves.

Within this "culture of narcissism," where self-fulfillment and self-aggrandizement have become the socially sanctioned ideal, even duty and service to others are subsumed under the category of self-interest. (20) Thus, if benefits are provided for the elderly, the best justification for this limited largess is that, eventually, all of us will arrive at the same place. It is self-interest that justifies and explains the public interest. (21)

There is no need to review the retinue of underfunded services and programs which characterize the field of aging. Their emphasis is on crisis intervention and custodial care rather than on planning and prevention. The approach is segmented and problem-oriented rather than holistic. Often demeaning approaches to service are the consequence of treating individuals as if they were objects, or commodities. People are helped, but usually given little opportunity to reciprocate . . . This is one of the more refined forms of humiliation.

The most dangerous consequence of the residual social service approach to meeting the needs of the elderly is that is serves as an explanation and a justification, proposing that something <u>is</u> being done. But in fact nothing much is changed. The social service providers help to perpetuate the problems and the oppression because their actions do not significantly impact upon the political and cognitive context within which the problems associated with old age are defined. (22)

3. <u>Progress and Rationality</u>

Instrumental reason, often defined to be synonymous with rationality, involves the calculation of constantly more precise and more efficient means for the accomplishment of utilitarian ends. (23) Modern empirical science, the institutional incarnation of instrumental reason, has as its goal the ever greater mastery over nature. Progress in the modern world is thought to coincide largely with the progress of empirical science and of derived technologies. It is assumed that this value-neutral science, which has

become synonymous with reason and the source of all true knowledge, will ultimately solve the problems of all mankind. (24)

In the field of aging, one of the consequences of this belief in empirical science, or "scientism" as it is called by the critical theorists, is the inordinate emphasis placed upon biological aging. (25) It is as if the physical deterioration of the body were the main problem and deathlessness the idealized goal. Here also the emphasis is upon the individual and his/her deficiencies. The solution is assumed to be technical/mechanical, and the social institutional issues are avoided. As before, aging is viewed as a type of pathology and death becomes the ultimate illness. Ironically, progress in life culminates in the denial of life's progress, in death.

A second, less obvious consequence of the belief in the invincibility of science and in progress is that it acquires a quasi-normative status, i.e. we moderns claim to be better than our predecessors because of our greater knowledge. The effect of this pretentious cognition upon the process of aging is expressed in the relationship between generations. Whereas in Africa and parts of Asia the aged are highly regarded because they are thought to be closer to the Source, among us the aged are denigrated because it is assumed that they know less and therefore are less competent. (26) The younger generations reign over their elders not only because they are physically stronger and economically advantaged, but also because they are assumed to be closer to the Truth.

In the realm of public policy the most mathematical of the social sciences,

economics, has become the paradigm for rationality. Every decision is assumed to have a quantifiable cost and an equally quantifiable benefit. The ideologically based judgments which are implicit in cost/benefit analysis are easily overlooked. (27) Thus in the field of aging, whereas service provision might, and often has been made profitable and efficient, it is impossible to make the claim that promoting the well-being of older persons is a cost-effective way to utilize societal resources.

Summary

In reviewing these key elements of the contemporary ITS, basic conceptualizations relating to power, guilt and responsibility, work, self-sufficiency, progress and rationality, we do not make the assumption that this is an ideology which is cynically imposed upon society by oppressors from above. Rather, these ideas have their roots in the political, cultural, economic, religious and philosophic history of the West. This thought structure has been internalized by all of us who have been socialized into this late twentieth century world. To bring about a change which is genuinely liberating requires critical thinking and critical learning about those who control the major institutions of society, among the professionals who manage them, and most especially among those who populate them.

We proceed in the next section with the task of critical thinking and move toward critical learning, leading to a sort of "desocialization," in order to make possible resocialization to new, alternative paradigms of thought and action. (28)

Elements of an Alternative Thought Structure

The aim of the remainder of this paper is to propose a series of alternative elements for a thought structure which, it is hoped will avoid some of the present anomalies associated with growing older and becoming aged. We have attempted to link these ideas to action proposals which have as their goal the rapid institutionalization of these new meanings.

The five alternative elements which we propose are approximately, but not fully parallel to the five key elements in the ITS which have been discussed above.

1. The legitimacy of the institutionalized thought structure is constantly open to question and challenge in the light of changing social and historical circumstances.

The legitimacy of inherited ideas is maintained primarily by those who have power. But both the source and the meaning of this power require critical examination. We would observe that, whereas the unquestioning acceptance of established authority invites tyranny, its opposite, total distrust of all social bonds of unequal power, is equally destructive of the possibility of social order. (29) It is not so much that a middle road must be found, as that a new social understanding of the meaning of power and authority must be formed.

We offer no simple formula for such a new understanding. We believe that it must not continue to be based upon the (masculine) capacity for violence and the political legitimation of coercive force.

What we have in mind is closer to the Ghandian concept of satyagraha, truth force, given a Western coloration. (30) The new power struggle which we envision is not to be limited to the confines of the established debate among vested political interests. Rather, the struggle must be at he level of a people's movement. It involves the recognition that the needed changes in people's lives will not be imposed from above, and that the power which counts is not the power of domination, to control nature and lives of others. Rather it is the power to control one's own life collectively and individually. (31)

For the aged this means the recognition of the severe limits of age-centered advocacy politics within the pluralistic context. Aging must become everyone's concern because aging is synonymous with living. It means "youth and aged together," as the Grey Panthers have said, promoting a people-centered rather than a power-centered society. But slogans such as these are not enough. In the life-world of people and institutions it means the building of economic and psychological independence from centralized control by strengthening self-help and mutual-help networks among all people. It means reducing dependence upon the mysteries of expertise, calling upon the under-utilized resources of youth and old age whose talents have been systematically defined as surplus. As we shall suggest below, this leads not simply to the expansion of voluntarism but an expansion of the meaning of work.

2. Social problems derive primarily from problematic social conditions.

The problems associated with old age,

the most pervasive of which are poverty, loneliness, and a sense of uselessness, can in large part be resolved by social-institutional changes rather than by changes demanded of the individual. We would suggest that physical well-being, which is intricately intertwined with the maintenance of a physically, socially, and mentally healthy life style, is not primarily dependent upon medical care. Poverty is not usually overcome by welfare payments and loneliness is not significantly reduced by counseling.

One of the types of social institutional change that is likely to be most productive for the reduction of problems associated with aging involves a major restructuring of the normative lime cycle. (32) This means the redistribution of leisure, learning, work, and rest in a different sequence along the life course. Thus, opportunities for temporary retirement might be provided to parents when their children are infants. Work opportunities might be created for adolescents who do not care to study. Study leaves are offered to workers who are suffering from burn-out, and employment is made available for those who are older and do not care to remain at leisure.

The sequences of the normative life cycle derive from an era when life expectancy was much lower, when most women remained in the home, and old age was a rarity, when men were expected to hold one job for a lifetime, and only a minority of the population were educated beyond grade school. A major restructuring of activities and sequences along the life course is likely to make many of the current problems associated with not only old age, but also youth and middle age, obsolete.

3. All human beings are equal in worth regardless of their capacity to produce or their socially ascribed status.

A full agreement with the principle of human equality as carefully defined by the English social philosopher, R. W. Tawney, requires not only that all persons are regarded equal, regardless of sex, race, creed, or national origin, but also that they have equal civil, human and material rights, regardless of their relationship to the means of production. (33) Equality constitutes a cognition of others which neither unjustly glorifies them, nor is demeaning. While not a simple concept, its aim is to require the equal distribution of rights and the equal allocation of responsibilities among all citizens.

For the aged (and for all others who are not currently attached to the labor force) the application of the ideals of equality cold lead not only to the elimination of the guilt which is usually associated with this allegedly inferior status, but also to the provision of an adequate wage. The meaning of work could be changed so as to include multiple new activities such as cooking, housekeeping, caring for family and neighbors, and giving joy to others. (34) There is no reason wages cannot be paid for these activities. Such a redefinition of work would necessitate a societal commitment to full employment as a first priority. Our economy which is increasingly oriented toward the exchange of information and the provision of services may have a better potential of meeting this goal than the rapidly declining industrial economy. (35)

4. To be human is to be a social being, dependent upon and responsible for the

lives of others. To live is to share life.

Human beings are biologically, economically and socially dependent on one another. Not only economic goods but also knowledge, language, and consciousness itself are dependent upon communication with others. The social Darwinist world view of the survival of the fittest which has been used to justify self-aggrandizement might be replaced by Kropotkin's theory of the survival of those who cooperate. (36) Rather than assuming that all of the world's goods are limited, and therefore subject to the zero-sum rules of economics, many of the most valued goods are unlimited, subject to multiple-sum rules, e.g. love, knowledge, health, oy friendship, etc. The more you give, the more your and we and all of us have.

From this perspective the contemporary system of social welfare wherein everyone, including those who are aged, is expected to aim for maximum self-sufficiency and independence from others can be viewed as a unique,historical aberration. An alternative system would be based upon the assumption that all persons, regardless of age, are entitled to material and political rights, not because they are worthy and have worked hard, not because they are diseased or disabled, but because they are human, and all human beings need each other to maintain their humanity. This includes not only the right to medical care, of food, or housing, but also the right to give and to share of themselves with others. Within the newer cohorts of predominantly middle-class aged, maintaining opportunities to give and share knowledge, wisdom, talent, love, and friendship is likely to e even more significant than the opportunity to

receive. (37)

5. It is primarily cultural/historical knowledge rather than the capacity for technical mastery over nature which grants coherence and meaningfulness to human existence.

Rational human action requires more than technical competence and includes a vision of, and a compulsion to create the good. (38) Such a vision is invariably a product of the history and culture of a people. Those who can only with difficulty identify with it because they believe that they are "self-made" and that the past and future are irrelevant to their being in the present, may be risking their own sanity. (39)

For all persons, i.e. all of us who are aging, such an understanding permits of a cyclical, rather than an undirectional view of life. Birth, growth and death all serve to mark the rhythms of circular time. People, generations, and civilizations come and go. The solutions to today's problems become the problems for tomorrow's solutions. The frontiers of knowledge are not all before us. We are not unquestionably wiser than our forbears, and in the past life was not uniformly squalid. Our own life makes sense only as an extension of the lives of others, those with whom we share our lives now, those who came before us, and those who will follow. In short we would emphasize that life and living is sacred, and only unimportantly functional.

The practical implications of the adoption of such an alternative conception would lead to the development of social institutions which are maximally age integrated. There would remain little

justification for maintaining educational institutions and welfare programs which utilize chronological age as the primary criterion in the allocation of benefits to individuals. The classification of adults by age would in many settings become totally irrelevant.

Aside from the major implications of such a changed view of the self in the world and in history, this alternative conception might rid us of such notions as the obsolescence of the aged, the fearfulness of death, and the idea that time is our master. This would enable us to cease committing major societal resources toward the control of death, and instead focus on the never-ending spiritual need to celebrate live, through music, are, science, and poetry.

Implication for change in the profession of Social Work

We have suggested a series of alternative conceptualizations, ideas affecting the way we think about time, work, power, and reality. We have asserted that change on the institutional level, change that can genuinely lead to the alleviation and prevention of social problems, must include changes in societally defined meanings. In this final section, our purpose is to touch briefly upon how these ideas might impact upon the profession of social work.

Social workers who are in substantial agreement with the critical approach which has been developed in this paper are likely to want to engage in any or all of the following actions:

1. Join in exposing the destructive consequences of present belief

systems as they impact upon individual lives, upon social institutions, and most specifically, upon the system of social services intended to meet the needs of the elderly.

2. Expand upon the types of alternative conceptualization which we have begun to suggest and join with others who are like-minded in creating a new language of human welfare.

3. Work toward the experimental institutionalization of these meanings in new, innovative settings.

Effective engagement in actions of this type involves a significant level of personal risk. Most of us inconsistently try to maintain ourselves in this world, while simultaneously investing important energies in giving shape to the other world, the world that should be. The trick is to try to <u>be what we want to become</u>, individually and together. But in this effort we are easily sidetracked, mainly because there is an inconsistence between what we intellectually know, and what we feel. The rationalizations are many. We get coopted into serving what are defined as the pressing needs <u>now</u>. We have to be "realistic" despite our knowledge that in helping sustain the limits of realism we become both perpetrators and victims of injustice. We yearn for an elusive personal security, and for what is absurdly called success. In short, full engagement in challenging the ITS includes a threat to our status and our claimed rights as professionals.

Social workers, like other professionals, are in an important way an

elite group in contemporary society. They participate in "mythmaking" as it affects their area of expertise, from a position of authority. (40) As elites, they help to structure meanings, language, and expectations within the society as a whole, and most especially among their clients. (41) Thus, the authority to designate a particular interventive act as helping, rather than as oppression, and the right to define categories of deviance are largely granted to social workers as an implicit professional right and responsibility. As Edelman cogently suggests, the language of helping that social workers use is a political language and its utilization in practice is a political act. (42)

We would therefore suggest that the political resources that accompany the professional status of social workers be harnessed to bring abut change in both the social welfare system and the profession itself. We look forward to the historical evolution of the post-professional helper.

Post-professional social work practice is overtly political. It does not attempt to hide behind the skirts of what is neither an objective scientific knowledge base nor a value neutral technology. Its primary loyalty is toward those who are systematically disadvantaged, not to particular institutions, methodologies, agencies, or professional associations. Post-professional will be wary of classification and categorization of individuals by age, sex, race, or disability. They recognize that within this society, shaped by this ITS, distinctions such as these are easily used to pit one disadvantaged constituency against another. They know that the truly needy includes nearly everybody. Post-professional practice never ceases to be

self-critical, recognizing that both traditional professionalism as well as the types of practice that are likely to succeed it are to be understood only within their historical and cultural context: they are meaningful only within their particular space and time. (43)

Thus will the continued exploitation of talent, the genius, the experience, and the commitment of social workers in the service of an unjust social order be gradually converted to a new, authentic form of practice. Those who would challenge these views because they appear to be hopelessly utopian and unrealistic should know that every argument for realism, in the final analysis, is but an argument for the prevention of change.

As for the field of aging, this is an area in which great opportunities lie before us. Politically, this opportunity derives from the fact that all human beings are included; the potential constituency is everyone. Social workers tragically share with other helping professionals, and with the society as a whole, negative attitudes toward aging and old age. (44) They must start there, changing not merely their own attitudes, but also, and more fundamentally, the basic meanings for the entire society. As a new ITS becomes more fully developed and understood, we can expect social workers to evolve different approaches to, for example, health as distinguished from medicine, regeneration as distinguished from retirement, lifetime wages as distinguished from OASDI. If these efforts and others like them are successful, they may lead to the creation of new people's movements including al of us, young and old, who share in this vision of power for liberation not domination, work for fulfillment not exploitation, life

and service to meet the needs of people not for profit, and knowledge to re-endow the world with sacredness, not for utility. (45).

NOTES

1. We distinguish, of course, between social problems and private troubles.

2. Among the more important of these are, Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, N.Y., Harcourt Brace, 1936; Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality. N.Y., Doubleday, 1966; Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man. Boston, Beacon, 1969; Jungen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, Boston, Beacon, 1971.

3. The term, Institutionalized Thought Structure, is taken from Roland L. Warren, The Sociology of Knowledge and the Problems of the Inner Cities. Social Science Quarterly, 52:3, 1971; and Roland L. Warren, Stephen M. Rose and Ann Bergunder, The Structure of Urban Reform, Lexington, D.C. Heath, 1974, pp. 19-25.

4. The maintenance of conceptual coherence is achieved by means of what Peter Marris calls the, "conservative impulse." This is not political conservatism but rather a cognitive process within which new experience is adapted to the existing thought structure. See Loss and Change, N.Y., Anchos, 1975, p.4.

5. Berger and Luckmann, op.cit., p.64.

6. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward,

Regulating the Poor, The Functions of Public Welfare, N.Y., Random House, 1971; Warren, Rose, and Bergunder, op.cit.

7. The concept of turbulent environments was developed by F. E. Emery. Futures We're In, Canberra, Australian National University, 1974, pp. 19-30.

8. Fundamental changes in ITS may also result from political revolutions, though we are inclined to believe that, if such is to be the intended effect, the cognitive changes must substantially precede the political changes. This is one way to distinguish between revolutions, (which are accompanied by cognitive changes) and rebellions (in which there is merely a playing of "musical chairs").

9. Thomas S. Kuhn. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Second Ed. Chicago, University of Chicago, 1970.

10. Richard J. Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory. University of Pennsylvania, 1978, p. 85

11. Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, The Homeless Mind, N.Y., Random House, 1973; Milton Rokeach, The Open and Closed Mind, N.Y., Basic Books, 1960; Alvin Toffler, The Third Wave, N.Y., Morrow, 1980; Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcism, N.Y., Norton, 1979.

12. Charles E. Lindblom, The Intelligence of Democracy, N.Y. Free Press, 1965; Edward C. Banfield, Political Influence N.Y. Free Press, 1961; also see Norman Birnbaum, on the Possibility of a New Politics in the West, Beyond the Crisis

N.Y., Oxford, 1977 pp. 212-213.

13. Berger and Luckmann. op.cit., p. 55, 93F.

14. Robert H. Binstock, Aging and American Politics, in The Later Years, Social Applications of Gerontology, R. A. Relish, ed. Monterrey, Brooks/Cole, 1977.

15. The term "moral career" has been borrowed from Erving Goffman, Asylums, N.Y., Doubleday, 1961, p. 125 f.

16. Paolo Freire discusses a similar phenomenom among the peasants of Brazil. "So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing, and are incapable of learning anything-that they are sick, lazy and unproductive-that in the end they have become convinced of their own unfitness. . . . " Pedogogy of the Oppressed. N.Y., Seabury, 1970, p. 49.

17. See, Richard Rubenstein, The Cunning of History, N.Y., Harper, 1975. Also Shimon Gottschalk, Communities and Alternatives, N.Y., Wiley, 1975, p. 4.

18. David G. Gil, Unraveling Social Policy, Cambridge, Schenkman, 1976, p. 18.

19. Harold, Wilensky and Charles Lebeaux, Individual Society and Social Welfare, N.Y., Russell Sage, 1958.

20. Lasch, op.cit., pp. 42-43.

21. Edward C. Banfield, op. cit.

22. See. Carol Estes, The Aging Enterprise San Francisco, Josey Bass, 1979, p. 11f. We define oppression as the

treatment of human beings as if they are objects.

23. David Held, In Introduction to Critical Theory, Univ. of California, pp. 148-174; Haberman, op.cit., p. 4.

    The aim of critical theory is not to reject "empirical science' but to expose its limitations. It proposes to enlarge upon the possibilities of science as a means for building human knowledge. For a compatible, but different criticism of empirical science see, Abraham H. Maslow, The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance Chicago, Regency, 1969. Also see, Egon Bittner, Technique and the Conduct of Life, Social Problems, 30:3, 1983, pp. 249-261.

24. Herman Kahn, and A.J. Wiener, Toward the Year 2000, N.Y. Macmillan, 1967

25. Modern empirical science has become, "methodology emptied of philosophical thought" . . . "Scientism means science's belief in itself", Habermans, op.cit., p. 4.

26. John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, N.Y. Doubleday, 1970, chapter 3.

27. Seldon Wolin, The New Public Philosophy, Democracy 1:4, October 1981, p. 28 f.

28. Ira Shor, Critical Teaching and Every Day Life, Boston, South End Press, 1980, p. 268.

29. Walter Lippman highlighted this issue as the central dilemma of liberalism more than fifty years ago. A Preface to

Morals, Macmillan, 1929. Also see: Richard Sennet, Authority, N.Y. Random House, 1980; Jurgen Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, Boston, Beacon, 1975.

30. Mahatma K. Ghandi, Non Violent Resistance, N.Y. Schocken, 1951, p.3.

31. The authors, three American males, have been influenced by the literature of the contemporary women's liberation movement. Note that liberation is viewed collectively. See especially, Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature, N.Y. Harper, 1980.

32. In French this is called, encyclage. See William McKinney, Phenomenarchy: A suggestion for Social Redesign, Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences, 9:23, 1973, pp. 163-181: also, Larry Hirschorn, Social Policy and the Life Cycle: A Developmental Perspective, Social Service Review, 51:3, 1977, pp. 434-450.

33. R. W. Tawney, Equality. London, George Allen and Unwin, 1964 (first published in 1931).

34. Work in America, an NIMH product whose publication was aborted by the Nixon administration, first raised these issues. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1963; also see, Shimon Gottschalk, Fifty Years of Moosehaven: The Lessons of Experience, The Gerontologist 1973.

35. See, Barry Bluestone, The Deinstitutionalization of America, N.Y. Basic Books; also, Allan Wolfe, America Impasse, Boston South End, 1981.

36. Pitor Kropotkin, Mutual Aid,

(originally published in London in 1902). Boston, Porter Sargent, 1963. This is a classic example of ideology in science. Both T. H. Huxley, the follower of Darwin, and Kropotkin, the two major antagonists in this turn-of-the-century debate, based their arguments on the same data.

37. Glen H. Elder, Jr. Historical Experiences in Later Years, in Tamara K. Hareven and Kathleen J. Adams, Aging and Life Course Transitions, N.Y. Guilford, 1982.

38. This idea is almost as old as the Western intellectual tradition itself. For Plato, in The Republic, rationality is identified with "the good".

39. See Robert J. Lifton, The life of the Self: Toward a New Psychology, N.Y., Simon and Shuster, 1976, also, Christopher Lasch, op.cit.

40. On the significance of myths in social work practice, see the analysis of Martin Rein and Sheldon White, "Knowledge for Practice," Social Service Review, 51:1 (March 1981) pp. 1-41.

41. Murray Edelman, Political Language, Words That Succeed and Policies that Fail, New York, Academic Press, 1977. p. xx.

42. op. cit., pp. 57-76.

43. The concept of post-professionalism which is introduced here requires further expansion. A separate paper on this topic is in process.

44. R.M. Coe, Professional Perspectives on

the Aged, The Gerontologist, 7 (1967) pp. 114-119.

45. A sacred society is one in which symbols, events, and meanings gain significance through history, over time. See Howard Becker, Social Thought from Love to Science. Washington, Harren Press, 1952, Vol. I, pp. I-XVIV.